

# Power Calls Plans for SAC 'Not Adequate'

U. S. Can't Be Sure  
Of Its Strength in  
Future, General Says

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Administration plans for the future strength of the Strategic Air Command are "not adequate," Gen. Thomas Power, SAC chief, told Senators today.

Gen. Power was the first public witness in a series of hearings by the Senate Preparedness and Space Committees. The group is exploring the controversy over new intelligence estimates of Soviet missile building and the questions of a missile gap and a possible future deterrent gap.

"As of this very moment," Gen. Power said, "the Strategic Air Command is the most powerful military force in the history of the world. Our problem is to keep it that way."

"How much force the potential aggressor thinks you will have left after an attack is what counts in deterrence," he said.

## Agrees With Johnson

He agreed with Senator Johnson, Democrat of Texas, that present plans for a future strength of SAC are inadequate and that this country cannot be sure that enough of SAC would survive a future missile attack to permit it to be a good deterrent force.

Gen. Power said he stands by his recent New York speech in which he said 300 Soviet missiles could knock out SAC and in which he implied the Soviets would have this force before this country was prepared to meet it.

Committee Counsel Edwin Weisl pointed out that Defense Secretary Gates told a Senate committee yesterday that Gen. Power's calculation was "unrealistic."

## Key to Deterrence

"That speech was submitted for clearance for correctness, policy and security to the Department of Defense, the State Department, the Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Air Staff," Gen. Power said. The speech was cleared, he said, and "I still stand by every statement in that speech."

On the deterrence problem, Gen. Power said, "warning time." Right now

SAC would have more than 15 minutes warning of a Russian bomber attack. A 10-minute percentage of SAC's heavy bombers could be off the ground and on their way to Russia within 15 minutes. Therefore, Russia would not consider an attack.

But, said Gen. Power, when the Soviets have 300 intercontinental ballistic missiles, the warning time will be zero.

If the planes were in the air and loaded with bombs at all times, a missile attack could not touch them.

Senator Johnson said the new administration budget provides "only a very small percentage" of the money needed to maintain what Gen. Power considers an adequate airborne alert.

## Power Avoids Criticism

Democratic Senators asked Gen. Power questions which appeared to be designed to lead to vigorous criticism of administration defense policies, but Gen. Power refused to follow.

Senators had to ask him several times in several ways before he would use the word "inadequate" in reference to present plans for SAC's future.

It was only in answer to questions that Gen. Power repeated that he wanted a larger airborne alert than the administration currently was planning; that he would "very much like to have" the virtually canceled B-70 superbomber (avoiding use of the word "essential") and that he would like faster replacement of some of his obsolete aircraft.

Asked by Senator Johnson if he was opposed "to the down-

grades on Soviet missiles," Gen. Power replied simply, "I don't know if they were downgraded."

Senator Wiley, Republican of Wisconsin, said he had been told that the Soviet Union had only one ICBM launching site. Gen. Power said he would not comment in public on numbers, but that "to build missiles without launching pads was like building cars without wheels."

Asked if Russia could build hidden ICBM pads, he replied, "The Soviet Union has quite a reputation for being able to conceal things."

Gen. Power, according to Pentagon sources, would like to keep half of his heavy bombers on airborne alert during the period of the greatest missile gap—roughly from the beginning of 1961 through the time when a missile radar warning system is completed, perhaps in 1963.

"It is incumbent on me," Gen. Power said, "to protect my force against the worst situation that could happen. If we are surprised then it will be a pleasant surprise as it will be less than we expect."

Senator Saltonstall, Republican of Massachusetts, said, however, that Gen. Power's supporters, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense and the President had to take a broader point of view than just the worst problems that could conceivably face one military commander.

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